

**Regional Differences in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
With Overall Comparisons to Southern Baptists**

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Research and Evaluation

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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INTRODUCTION

Are there regional differences in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)? How do ELCA worship attenders compare with those affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention?

The U.S. Congregational Life Survey provides us with an opportunity to explore these questions. The U.S. Congregational Life Survey was an interdenominational project funded by the Lilly Foundation.¹ Four hundred twenty-two randomly selected congregations in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) participated. These congregations distributed the questionnaires to those attending worship on April 29, 2001. In total, 43,463 worshipers, age 15 or above, completed questionnaires.²

The report uses the four major Census regions of the United States.

The **Northeast** region includes Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.

The **Midwest** region includes Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Kansas.

The **South** region includes Delaware, Maryland, Washington, D.C., Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas.

The **West** region includes Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, Washington, Oregon, California, Alaska, and Hawaii.

¹ It was directed by Cynthia Woolever.

² The majority of worshipers completed the same four page questionnaire but a subset of questionnaires included one of 11 different fourth pages. Each of these sets of questions was answered by approximately 600 worshipers.

A SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

Characteristics of Worshipers Where There Were No Differences by Region³

- More women than men attend worship in each of the regions (about 60% women compared to 40% men).
- There was little difference in the average age of those attending by region (54 or 55).
- There was little difference in marital status by region (nearly 75% are married).
- While the worshipers in the West are the most likely to report a race/ethnicity other than White (about 5%), the vast majority of worshipers in all regions are White (95% or more in each region).
- A high percentage of worshipers in all the regions said they had a strong sense of belonging to their congregation (77% to 78%).
- There were no regional differences on the statement: “It is important it is for me to be a member of a Lutheran Church” (42% “strongly agreed” and 39% “agreed”).
- There were also no regional differences on the statement: “It is important for me to be a member of a congregation that is associated with the ELCA” (26% “strongly agreed” and 43% “agreed”).
- There were no regional differences in the percent of ELCA worshipers who said they regularly take part in evangelism and outreach activities (14%).
- Slightly more than one-third of the worshipers said they were not regularly involved in any group activities in the congregation other than worship in all the regions (36% to 38%).
- The percent of worshipers reporting “major” conflict in their congregations is about 10 percent or less in all the regions. (These percentages reflect the number of worshipers reporting major conflict in their congregations, not the percent of the 422 congregations with conflict.)
- In response to the question “Have you ever experienced a definite moment of decisive faith commitment or conversion,” there was little difference by region (77% to 79% responded “no”).
- Less than one-fourth of all worshipers in the ELCA take the position that “the Bible is the word of God, to be taken literally word for word.” Differences from region to region are small (21% to 25%).

Differences by Region

In all the cases noted below there are regional differences, but these differences should also be understood in a broader context. For example, worshipers in the West (22%) are much more likely to say the death penalty should never be used than worshipers in the Northeast (12%). At the same

³ Because of the number of respondents, any difference found in percentages between the regions will be “statistically” significant. Included in this section, however, are characteristics where there are clearly no differences of substance or importance.

time, well over three-fourths of worshipers in both the Northeast and the West believe there are circumstances when the death penalty should be used.

West Region

- Worshipers in the West had the highest levels of education (46% had a bachelor's degree or higher).
- Worshipers in the West had the highest incomes (33% in the West reported a total annual household income before taxes of \$75,000 or more).
- Worshipers in the West were most likely to "agree" or "strongly agree" with the statement: "In general, there is a good match between our congregation and our pastor" (91% in the West compared to 85% in the South).⁴
- Worshipers in the West are more likely than worshipers in the Midwest and South to think of themselves as Republicans (57% in the West compared to 44% in the Midwest and the 43% in the South).
- Worshipers in the West are most likely to take the position that homosexuals should be allowed to be ordained as ministers whether or not they are sexually active (30% in the West compared to 21% in the Midwest).
- Worshipers in the West are most likely to say the death penalty should never be used (22% in the West compared to 12% in the Northeast).

Northeast Region

- Worshipers in the Northeast are more likely to say they did not previously worship at another congregation before coming to a Lutheran congregation (21% in the Northeast region compared to 9% in the West.)
- Worshipers in the Northeast were also most likely to "agree" or "strongly agree" with the statement: "All the different religions are equally good ways of helping a person find ultimate truth." Worshipers in the West were least likely to "agree" or "strongly agree" (63% in the Northeast compared to 45% in the West).
- Worshipers in the Northeast were also more likely to "agree" or "strongly agree" with the statement: "I think a person should do what they think is right for them, even if it means going against the teachings of their church" (45% in the Northeast compared to 29% in the West).
- Worshipers in the Northeast are more likely than worshipers in the Midwest and South to think of themselves as Republicans (57% in the Northeast compared to 44% in the Midwest and the 43% in the South).
- Worshipers in the Northeast are most likely to take the position that homosexuals should not be allowed to be ordained as ministers (46% in the Northeast compared to 36% in the West).
- Worshipers in the Northeast are most likely to say that abortion should be legal when a woman's life is in danger (87% in the Northeast compared to 78% in the Midwest).

⁴ Comparisons are noted between regions with the greatest difference.

South Region

- Worshipers in the South are more likely to report attending worship more often (78% in the South region say they attend worship weekly or more compared to 71% in the Midwest).
- Worshipers in the South are the most likely to participate in Sunday school (31% in the South compared to 21% in the Midwest).
- Worshipers in the South report giving more to their congregations than worshipers in any of the other regions (55% in the South give five percent or more of net income regularly to their congregation compared to 51% in the other regions).
- Worshipers in the South are more likely than worshipers in the other regions to:
 - a. read the Bible (46% weekly or more in the South compared to 28% in the Midwest)
 - b. read other religious books (46% weekly or more in the South compared to 28% in the Midwest)
 - c. attend a Bible study (19% weekly or more in the South compared to 10% in the Midwest)
 - d. pray privately (91% weekly or more in the South compared to 81% in the Midwest)
 - e. talk about their faith with household members frequently (47% in the South compared to 29% in the Midwest).

Midwest Region

- Worshipers in the Midwest are less likely than worshipers in the other regions to:
 - a. read the Bible (28% weekly or more in the Midwest compared to 46% in the South).
 - b. read other religious books (28% weekly or more in the Midwest compared to 46% in the South)
 - c. attend a Bible study (10% weekly or more in the Midwest compared to 19% in the South)
 - d. pray privately (81% weekly or more in the Midwest compared to 91% in the South)
 - e. talk about their faith with household members frequently (29% in the Midwest compared to 47% in the South).
- Worshipers in the Midwest are most likely to say they are not sure if homosexuals should be allowed to be ordained as ministers (29% in the Midwest compared to 17% in the West).
- Worshipers in the Midwest are most likely to hold the laws covering the sales of fire arms should be more strict (72% in the Midwest compared to 57% in the Northeast).

Similarities and Differences Between ELCA Worshipers and Southern Baptist Worshipers

There are significantly fewer differences *within* the ELCA than *between* the ELCA and Southern Baptist worshipers. These differences consistently show a higher level of participation among Southern Baptists.

Similarities

- Among the worshipers in both ELCA and Southern Baptist congregations, the majority are women (about 60%).
- There was no difference in the percent of ELCA and Southern Baptist worshipers who said they had a strong sense of belonging to their congregation (78% among both groups).
- About 10 percent of ELCA and Southern Baptist worshipers reported “major” conflict in their congregations in the last two years.
- There were no differences between ELCA and Southern Baptist worshipers in responding to the statement: “In general, there is a good match between our congregation and our pastor” (86% in the ELCA and 88% for the Southern Baptists).

Differences

- More ELCA worshipers agreed (“agreed or strongly agreed”) that it was important for them to be a member of an ELCA congregation than did Southern Baptists with regard to the Southern Baptists Convention (69% in the ELCA compared to 57% for the Southern Baptists).
- Southern Baptist worshipers are younger than ELCA worshipers (49 compared to 54).
- Education levels are lower among the Southern Baptists (36% in the ELCA had a bachelor’s degrees or higher compared to 27% for the Southern Baptists).
- More Southern Baptists report ever being divorced (20% for the Southern Baptists compared to 16% for the ELCA.)
- More Southern Baptists indicate they are a race/ethnicity other than White (10.6% for Southern Baptists compared to 3.6% for the ELCA).
- Incomes are slightly higher in the ELCA (25% reported a total annual household income before taxes of \$75,000 or more compared to 22% of the Southern Baptists).
- Southern Baptist worshipers are much more likely than ELCA worshipers to report attending worship every week, or more than once a week (87% for the Southern Baptists compared to 74% for the ELCA).
- Over twice as many ELCA worshipers than Southern Baptists “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement: “All the different religions are equally good ways of helping a person find ultimate truth” (54% for the ELCA compared to 21% of the Southern Baptists).
- One-third fewer ELCA worshipers said they were involved in Sunday School than Southern Baptists (23% for the ELCA compared to 69% for the Southern Baptists).
- Twice as many Southern Baptists than ELCA worshipers said they regularly take part in evangelism or outreach activities (14% for the ELCA compared to 29% for the Southern Baptists).
- Over twice as many ELCA worshipers said they were not regularly involved in any group activities in the congregation other than worship (37% for the ELCA compared to 17% of the Southern Baptists).
- Many more Southern Baptist worshipers report giving five percent or more of their net income regularly to their church than do ELCA worshipers (52% for the ELCA compared to 72% for the Southern Baptists).

- In response to the question “Have you ever experienced a definite moment of decisive faith commitment or conversion,” the worshipers in the ELCA were considerably more likely to respond “no” than were Southern Baptist worshipers (78% in the ELCA compared to 44% of Southern Baptists).
- Many more Southern Baptist worshipers than ELCA worshipers take the position that “the Bible is the word of God, to be taken literally word for word” (71% for the Southern Baptists compared to 24% in the ELCA).

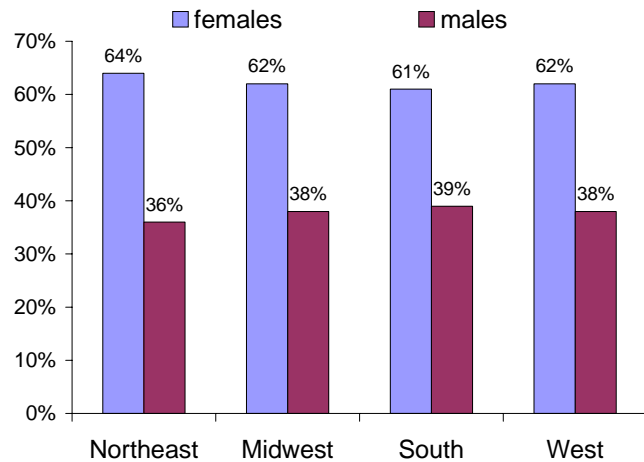
DETAILED FINDINGS

Characteristics of Those Attending Worship in the ELCA, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and Southern Baptist Convention

Gender

The vast majority of those attending worship in the ELCA were women—64 percent in the Northeast, 62 percent in the Midwest and the West, and 61 percent in the South. For the ELCA as a whole, 62 percent of those attending worship were women. (See Figure 1.) Among the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A), 62 percent of the worshipers were women. Among the Southern Baptists, 60 percent of the worshipers were women.

Figure 1: Gender of Those Attending Worship by Region



Age

In 2001, the average age of those attending worship in the South and the Northeast regions was 55. In the Midwest and West regions the average age was 54. For the ELCA as a whole the average age was 54. The average age among Presbyterian worshipers was 57. The average age among Southern Baptist worshipers was 49.

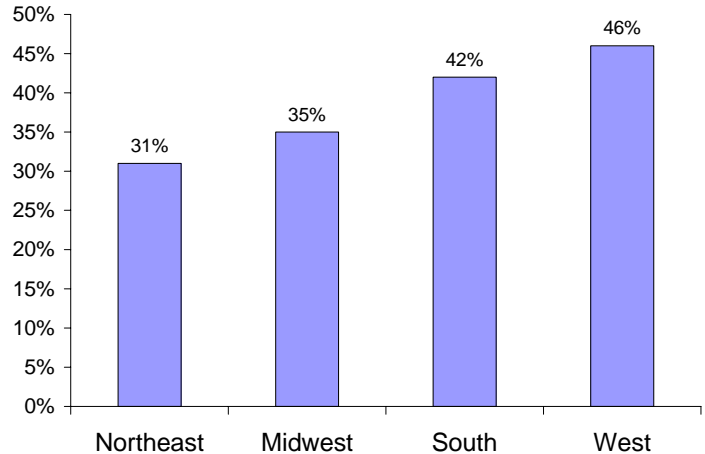
Education

Education levels are highest in the West where 46 percent of the worshipers had a bachelor’s degrees or higher. (See Figure 2.) Forty-two percent of the worshipers in the South had a bachelor’s degree or higher compared to 35 percent in the Midwest and 31 percent in the Northeast. For the ELCA as a whole 36 percent had bachelor’s degrees or higher. For the Presbyterians, it was 49 percent. For the Southern Baptists, it was 27 percent.

Marital Status

Seventy-three percent of the worshipers in the Midwest are currently married, compared to 73 percent in the South, 71 percent in the West and 70 percent in the Northeast. Two percent in the Midwest, Northeast, and South said they are “living in a committed relationship.” In the West, it was one percent. Among the Presbyterian worshipers, two percent said they are “living in a committed relationship.” Among the Southern Baptists, it was also two percent. Sixteen percent of ELCA worshipers reported being divorced at some point, which compares to 16 percent of the Presbyterian worshipers, and 20 percent of Southern Baptists.

Figure 2: Percent of Worshipers Holding a Bachelor’s Degree or Higher by Region



Race/Ethnicity and Language

Worshipers are most diverse in the West region with 5.4 percent indicating they are a race/ethnicity other than White. In the South, it was 4.6 percent of worshipers, compared to 4.1 percent in the Northeast and 2.8 percent in the Midwest. For the ELCA as a whole, 3.6 percent of the worshipers indicated they are a race/ethnicity other than White. This compares to 4.5 percent of Presbyterian worshipers and 10.6 percent of Southern Baptists.

Ninety-nine percent of ELCA worshipers in the Midwest region said English was their first language. It was 98 percent in the South, and 97 percent in the Northeast and the West regions. For the whole ELCA, 98 percent said English was their first language. It was also 98 percent among both Presbyterian worshipers and the Southern Baptists.

Income

Education levels are highest in the West region and so is income. Thirty-three percent of the worshipers in the West reported a total annual household income before taxes of \$75,000 or more. In the South, it was 30 percent. In the Northeast, it was 24 percent, and in the Midwest, 22 percent. For the ELCA as a whole it is 25 percent. For Presbyterians, 26 percent reported a total annual household income before taxes of \$75,000 or more, compared to 22 percent of the Southern Baptists.

Belonging, Participation, and Conflict

Worship Attendance

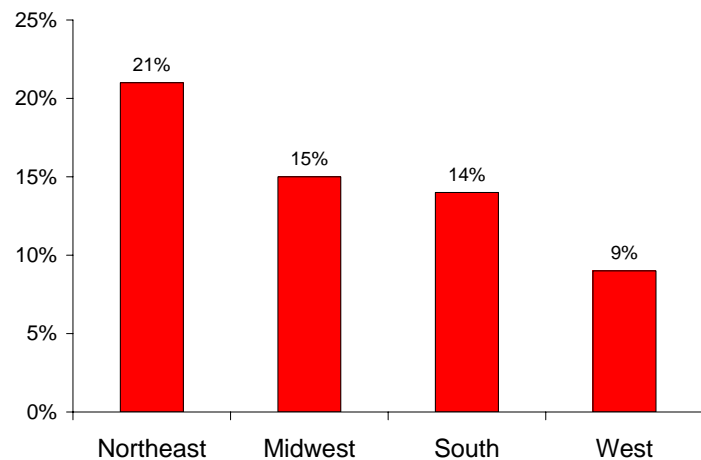
Seventy-eight percent in the South region said they attend worship usually every week or more than once a week. The percentage in the Northeast was 76 percent. In the West, it was 75 percent and in the Midwest, 71 percent. For the ELCA as a whole, it was 74 percent. Among the Southern Baptists, the percent who said they attend worship usually every week or more than once a week was 87 percent. (Data for the Presbyterians are unavailable.)

Previous Church Experience

The worshipers were asked “Before you started coming here, what type of congregations did you attend?” Table 1 shows the responses. Except in the Northeast, the majority of worshipers came from another Lutheran congregation. In the Midwest and the West, 62 percent of the worshipers worshiped previously at another Lutheran congregation compared to 59 percent in the South. In the ELCA overall, 59 percent of the worshipers attended another Lutheran congregation compared to 39 percent of Presbyterians (worshiped at another Presbyterian congregation) and 60 percent of Southern Baptists (worshiped at another Baptist congregation).

In the Northeast, 21 percent of the worshipers said they did not previously worship at another congregation before coming to a Lutheran congregation. (See Figure 3.) In the West, it was nine percent. In the South, it was 14 percent and in the Midwest, 15 percent. A lower percent of Southern Baptist worshipers (10%) than Lutheran worshipers (15%) said they did not previously worship at another congregation before coming to a Southern Baptist congregation.

Figure 3: Percent of Worshipers Not Previously Attending Worship Before Coming to a Lutheran Congregation



Those who came from other congregations to Lutheran congregations are most likely to come from Catholic congregations in the Northeast (15%) and the Midwest (7%). In the South and West, six percent came from Catholic churches and six percent came from Methodist churches. In the South, another six percent came from Baptist churches.

None of the worshipers attending a Lutheran church said they came from an Assembly of God, a Nazarene, or a Pentecostal church, and very few came from non-denominational churches.

The Presbyterian worshipers had previously attended a wide variety of other congregations in other denominations including Methodist (13%), Baptist (8%), and Lutheran (6%) congregations. For the Southern Baptists, eight percent of the worshipers came from other religious groups and six percent came from Methodist congregations. One percent report having come from a Lutheran church, one percent from an Episcopal congregation, one percent from a United Church of Christ congregation, and two percent from a Presbyterian congregation.

Table 1: Type of Church Attended Before Attending Current Church

	Midwest	Northeast	South	West	ELCA (overall)	Presbyterian (U.S.A.)	Southern Baptist
Lutheran	62%	47%	59%	62%	59%	6%	1%
Did not attend before	15%	21%	14%	9%	15%	13%	10%
Catholic	7%	10%	6%	6%	7%	5%	2%
Methodist	5%	6%	6%	6%	5%	13%	6%
Other	3%	4%	2%	4%	3%	6%	8%
Presbyterian	2%	3%	3%	4%	3%	39%	2%
United Church of Christ	2%	4%	1%	1%	2%	3%	1%
Baptist	2%	2%	6%	2%	3%	8%	60%
Episcopal	1%	3%	2%	3%	2%	2%	1%
Non-denominational	1%	0%	1%	3%	1%	3%	4%
Assembly of God	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	2%
Nazarene	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Pentecostal	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	2%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Belonging

Eighty percent of worshipers in the Northeast region said they had a strong sense of belonging to their congregation. Seventy-eight percent of the worshipers in the Midwest agreed, along with 77 percent of the worshipers in the South and West. For the ELCA as a whole, 78 percent said they had a strong sense of belonging. This compares to 77 percent of Presbyterians and 78 percent of Southern Baptists.

There were no regional differences on the statement: “It is important it is for me to be a member of a Lutheran Church” with 42 percent “strongly agreeing” and 39 percent “agreeing.” There were also no regional differences on the statement: “It is important for me to be a member of a congregation that is associated with the ELCA,” with 26 percent “strongly agreeing” and 43 percent “agreeing.” For the Southern Baptists, 26 percent “strongly agreed” and 31 percent “agreed” with the statement: “It is important to me that our congregation is affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention.”

Despite a high percentage indicating a strong sense of belong in their congregations, 54 percent “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement: “All the different religions are equally good ways of helping a person find ultimate truth.” (See Figure 4.) Sixty-three percent of the respondents in the Northeast “agreed” or “strongly agreed,” compared to 54 percent in the Midwest, 53 percent in

the South, and 45 percent in the West. For Presbyterians, 51 percent “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement, compared to 21 percent of Southern Baptists.

Forty-five percent of those in the Northeast region “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement: “I think a person should do what they think is right for them, even if it means going against the teachings of their church.” This compares to 38 percent in the Midwest, 33 percent in the South, and 29 percent in the West region. Overall for the ELCA, 37 percent of the worshipers “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement. (There were no comparable Presbyterian or Southern Baptist questions.)

Participation

When asked if they were regularly involved in Sunday school, 31 percent of the worshipers in the South said “yes,” compared to 24 percent in the Northeast and the West, and 21 percent in the Midwest. (See Figure 5.) Overall for the ELCA, 23 percent said they were involved in Sunday school. This compares to 31 percent of the Presbyterians and 69 percent of Southern Baptists. (There was no comparable Presbyterian question.)

Figure 4: Percent “Agreeing” or “Strongly Agreeing with the Statement: “All the Different Religions Are Equally Good Ways of Helping a Person Find Ultimate Truth” by Region

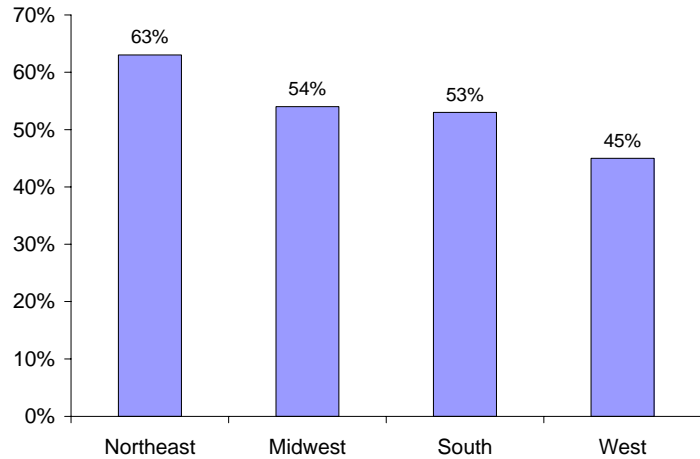
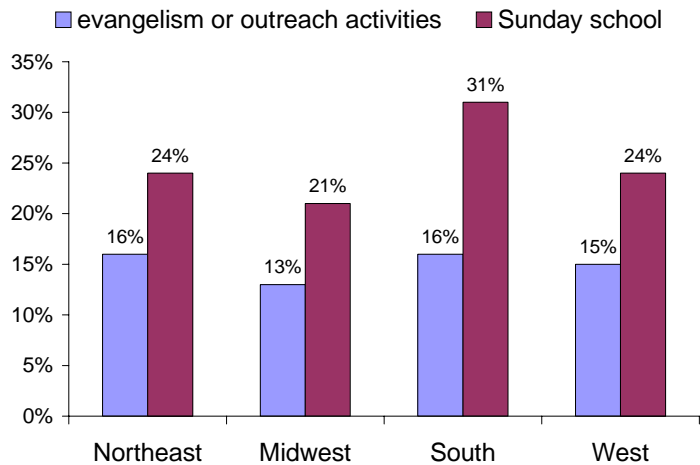


Figure 5: Percent Saying They Were Regularly Involved by Region



Sixteen percent of the worshipers in the South and the Northeast said they regularly take part in evangelism and outreach activities. This compares to 15 percent in the West and 13 percent in the Midwest. Overall for the ELCA, 14 percent said they regularly take part, compared to 17 percent for the Presbyterians and 29 percent for the Southern Baptists.

Thirty-eight percent of the worshipers in the Midwest and the Northeast said they were not regularly involved in any group activities in the congregation other than worship. In the South and the West region, it was 36 percent. Overall for the ELCA, 37 percent said they were not regularly involved in any group activities in the congregation other than worship. This compares to 31 percent of Presbyterians and 17 percent of the Southern Baptists.

Fifty-six percent of the worshipers from the South report giving five percent or more of net income regularly to their congregation. In each of the other regions the figure is 51 percent. For the ELCA as a whole, 52 percent give five percent or more of their net income regularly, compared to 72 percent of Southern Baptists.

Conflict

The percent of reported conflict is highest in the Northeast and Midwest with 11 percent of worshipers reporting “major conflict” within the last two years. Nine percent of the worshipers from the South reported “major conflict” as did seven percent of worshipers from the West. For the ELCA overall, ten percent report “major conflict” compared to 12 percent of the Presbyterians and 12 percent of Southern Baptists. (These percentages reflect the number of worshipers reporting major conflict in their congregations, not the percent of the 422 congregations with conflict.)

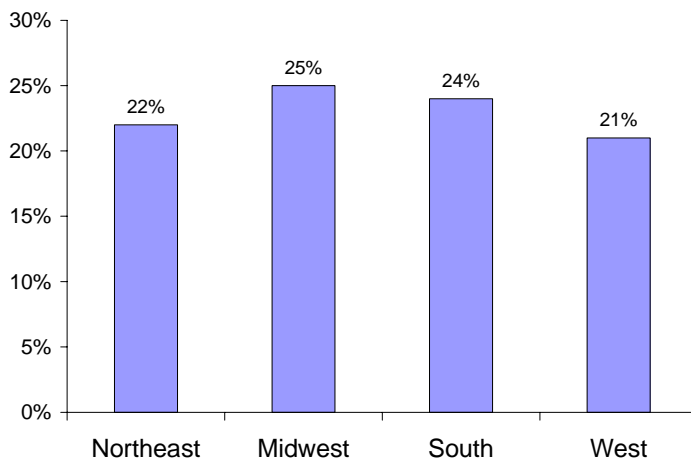
In the South, 85 percent of the worshipers “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement: “In general, there is a good match between our congregation and our pastor.” In the Midwest, 87 percent of the worshipers “agreed” or “strongly agreed” compared to 88 percent in the Northeast and 91 percent in the West. Overall in the ELCA, 86 percent “agreed” or “strongly agreed” compared to 86 percent of the Presbyterians and 88 percent of the Southern Baptists.

Beliefs, Experiences, Practices

In response to the question “Have you ever experienced a definite moment of decisive faith commitment or conversion,” 79 percent of the worshipers from the Midwest region said “no,” compared to 78 percent in the South and 77 percent in the Northeast and West regions. Overall for the ELCA, 78 percent said “no.” This compares to 72 percent of Presbyterians and 44 percent of Southern Baptist worshipers.

Twenty-five percent of the worshipers in the Midwest took the position “the Bible is the word of God, to be taken

Figure 6: Percent Taking the Position that the “Bible is the Word of God to be Taken Literally Word for Word” by Region



literally word for word.” (See Figure 6.) In the South, 24 percent took the same position, compared to 22 percent in the Northeast and 21 percent in the West. For the ELCA as a whole, 24 percent took this position. Among the Presbyterians, it is 22 percent and among Southern Baptists, 71 percent.

Lutherans in the South region are more likely than worshipers in the other regions to read the Bible, to read other religious books, to attend a Bible study, to pray privately, or to talk about their faith with household members frequently. (See Table 2.) (There are no comparable questions for the Presbyterians or the Southern Baptists.)

Table 2: Religious Practices, Importance of Beliefs, Closeness to God, Framework for Faith by Region

	Midwest	Northeast	South	West	ELCA (overall)
read the Bible privately - weekly or more	28%	30%	46%	34%	32%
attend a Bible study group - weekly or more	10%	10%	19%	16%	12%
pray privately - weekly or more	81%	88%	91%	81%	84%
read religious books - weekly or more	28%	30%	46%	34%	32%
frequently talk about matters of faith with household members	29%	35%	47%	32%	33%
religious beliefs are very important in day-to-day life	60%	70%	65%	62%	63%
feel very close to God most of the time	42%	55%	47%	53%	47%
denomination is a primary framework for faith	23%	34%	30%	21%	26%

Social Issues, Politics

Political Party Affiliation

The majority of worshipers in the Northeast (57%) and in the West (57%) generally think of themselves as Republicans. (See Table 3.) In the Midwest and the South, the percent of Republicans drops to 44 percent and 43 percent respectively. Twenty-two percent of the worshipers in the Midwest and 25 percent of those in the South generally think of themselves as Independents. (There are no comparable data for Presbyterians or Southern Baptists.)

Table 3: Political Party Affiliation Region

	Midwest	Northeast	South	West	ELCA (overall)
Republican	44%	57%	43%	57%	48%
Democrat	34%	28%	33%	24%	31%
Independent	22%	15%	25%	19%	21%

Homosexuality

Worshipers in the Northeast region are somewhat more conservative in their views of homosexuality than those in the other regions. (See Table 4.) Worshipers in the West are somewhat more tolerant. Those worshipers who favor the right of homosexuals to be married, or to be ordained as ministers, and those who favor extending to homosexuals the same rights as those in traditional marriages, or who believe homosexuality should be considered an acceptable lifestyle, are in the minority in every region. (There are no comparable questions for the Presbyterians or the Southern Baptists.)

Table 4: Views of Homosexuality by Region

	Midwest	Northeast	South	West	ELCA (overall)
homosexuals should be allowed to be ordained as ministers whether or not they are sexually active	21%	23%	28%	30%	24%
homosexuals should be allowed to be ordained as ministers if they are not sexually active	9%	14%	8%	12%	10%
homosexuals should not be allowed to be ordained as ministers	41%	46%	44%	37%	42%
not sure if homosexuals should be allowed to be ordained as ministers	29%	17%	20%	21%	24%
agree or strongly agree homosexuals should have the right to marry	19%	16%	20%	22%	19%
agree or strongly agree homosexuals should be entitled to the same rights as those in traditional marriages	29%	25%	26%	29%	28%
agree or strongly agree homosexuality should be considered an acceptable lifestyle	27%	25%	27%	30%	27%

Gun Control, Abortion, The Death Penalty, Euthanasia, Legalized Gambling

There are no consistent regional break-downs with regard to these issues and while there are differences from region to region, the vast majority of worshipers share the same opinions. (See Table 5.) Worshipers in the Midwest (72%) are most likely to hold that the laws covering the sale of fire arms should be more strict while those in the Northeast (57%) are least likely to do so. The worshipers in the West (22%) are most likely to say the death penalty should never be used and those in the Northeast (12%) are least likely to agree. A majority in all regions believe abortion should be legal when a woman's life is in danger or when a woman's physical health is in danger. Less than a majority, but 40 percent or more, say abortion should be legal when a woman's mental health is in danger.

Table 5: Gun Control, the Death Penalty, Abortion, Euthanasia, Gambling by Region

	Midwest	Northeast	South	West	ELCA (overall)
laws covering the sale of fire arms should be more strict	72%	57%	65%	67%	68%
the death penalty should never be used	18%	12%	13%	22%	17%
abortion should be legal when a woman's life is in danger	78%	87%	83%	81%	81%
abortion should be legal when a woman's physical health is in danger	54%	57%	62%	57%	56%
abortion should be legal when a woman's mental health is in danger	40%	49%	43%	46%	42%
there are circumstances in which doctors should be allowed to end a patient's life	37%	34%	35%	49%	38%
disapprove of legalized gambling	37%	29%	28%	23%	33%

Those in the Midwest (37%) are most likely to disapprove of legalized gambling while those in the West (23%) are least likely to disapprove. Finally, the greatest difference of opinion is on euthanasia where approximately one-third of the worshipers in the Midwest, Northeast, and South regions agreed there are circumstances in which doctors should be allowed to end a patient's life

compared to nearly half of the worshipers in the West region. (There are comparable questions for the Presbyterians or the Southern Baptists.)

CONCLUSIONS

There are regional differences in the ELCA but worshipers are far more alike than different. For better or worse, on characteristic after characteristic and issue after issue, ELCA worshipers are very similar. Those who point to differences within the denomination must do so by pointing to views held by a minority of worshipers. It is only when compared to Southern Baptists that significant and substantive differences emerge. Even when compared to the Southern Baptists, however, there are similarities. Among worshipers in both denominations a majority are women, and a similar percentage expressed a strong sense of belonging to their congregation. A similar percentage know of conflict in their congregations and a similar percentage report a good match between their congregation and their pastor.

On the other hand, more Southern Baptist worshipers compared to ELCA worshipers are divorced. Fewer Southern Baptists believe it is important for them to be a member of a congregation affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention than do worshipers in Lutheran congregations with regard to the ELCA.

It is in practicing religion, however, where the greatest differences appear. Southern Baptists attend worship more often; they are more likely to be involved in Sunday school; to regularly take part in evangelism or outreach activities; to be involved in their congregations in ways other than worship; and to give a higher percentage of their income to the church.